Dr *BATTELY's*

SERMON

Before the

QUEEN

IN

Christ's-Church, Canterbury,

MAY vi. 1694

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BY

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A SERMON

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1. *John.* v. latter part of *v.* 4.

——— And this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

VIctory is the happy Succeſs of War, a thing worthy the beſt and moſt ſerious Thoughts of a Chriſtian, whoſe Life is a continual Warfare, and whoſe chief ſtudy therefore ſhould be, how he may conquer: and that the rather, becauſe it is not here as in other Wars, where a Man may hope to eſcape Miſery, if not by proſperous Succeſs, yet by a ſpeedy and honourable Death. No, nothing here but

plain overcoming will ſerve the turn: for if once he be vanquiſh'd in the main Iſſue of this War, there is no kind Sword to put an end to his Sufferings, nor will the Grave it ſelf ſhelter him from thoſe Eternal Miſeries that are coming upon him. Well therefore, I ſay, do all the probable and poſſible ways, that lead to this Victory, deſerve our Conſideration: but this of *Faith* ſhould more eſpecially be regarded by us, becauſe Divine Wiſdom and Truth it ſelf have marked it out as a certain and infallible one.

But alas! theſe are things that Men generally little dream of, being ſo far from thinking and contriving how they may conquer, that they have, in a manner, forgotten that they are in a State of War; the Conſcience of their *Baptiſmal Vow*, which engag'd them in it, ſeeming as little to affect them now they are Men, as the Ceremonies, which it was accompanied with, did when they were Infants: and if you look into their Lives and Actions, you will find as little of its Power and Efficacy there, as you do of the Sign of the Croſs upon their Foreheads, both ſeem to be worn out and vaniſh'd away: and what if their Godfa-

thers

thers and Godmothers did, by making a raſh or formal Promiſe in their Names, entail this uneaſie War upon them? They ſee no reaſon why they ſhould be bound to the trouble of proſecuting it. The World and they are Friends, and content ſo to continue; however, if for decency ſake there muſt be at leaſt ſome ſhew of fighting, between them as Chriſtians, and the World, againſt whom, by profeſſing Chriſtianity, they have denounced War; yet they cannot but ſecretly think it a thing ſweeter than Victory it ſelf would be, to be overcome by ſo charming an Enemy as they have to deal with. There are too many, who though they will not openly talk thus, yet all the World may ſee that they live like Men who think thus; and ſuch will little care to hear a Warfare in which they are unwillingly engag'd, and a Victory which they had rather loſe than win, diſcourſed of. I can therefore, with any hopes of being favourably heard, ſpeak only to ſuch as deſire to be what their Baptiſm made them, and to do what that Vow obliges them; who, ſince they do profeſs a Faith that requires it of them, are reſolv'd, in order

to

to the gaining of this Victory, to fight manfully under their Lord's Banner againſt Sin, the World, and the Devil, and to continue Chriſt's faithful Soldiers and Servants unto their Lives end.

What I have to ſay upon this Subject ſhall be confined to anſwering *Three Queſtions*, which any one, who has a mind to underſtand the Importance of theſe Words, will naturally ask.

I. What this *Victorious Faith* is?
II. What is meant by the *World*, which is to be *overcome*?
III. How that *Faith* overcomes, and what kind of Victory it obtains for us.

I. What this *Faith* is the Apoſtle tells us in the Verſe following the Text, namely, the believing that *Jeſus is the Son of God.* A cheap Victory, will ſome ſay, if the giving our Aſſent to ſo reaſonable a propoſition will purchaſe it for us. If that will do, we are all of us already *Conquerours.* It was our Fate to be born ſuch, by being born

born of Chriſtian Parents, whoſe careful inſtitution of us in this Faith in our tender years, gave us then ſo deep a tincture of it, that if we would, we cannot quite waſh it out. The mighty Works which *Jeſus* did, the Teſtimony of his Miracles (as they tell us who have been at the pains ſeriouſly to conſider them) are ſo convincing and demonſtrative, that they who read them cannot but believe them, and therefore every Body amongſt whom we live, profeſs accordingly, and what ſhould we get by being ſingular and pretending to disbelieve that, of the truth of which all the civiliz'd World ſeems fully ſatisfyed? no body that we know of denying it but a Company of *Jews*, *Turks*, and *Heathens*, People whoſe very Character is Ignorance and Obſtinacy, and therefore their Infidelity is not much to be wondred at. So that, ſay they, if the giving our aſſent to ſo eaſie and plain a truth as this is, be this Conquering Faith, the day is Ours. Victory no longer hovers over our heads, but is lighted upon our Enſigns. This is the groſs Notion of Faith which I fear too many have: namely, that it is only the giving our Aſſent to a Propoſition or two,

which we have all the Reaſon and Authority imaginable to think true, and ſhould but be laught at and deſpiſed by wiſer Men than our ſelves for denying them.

But ſuppoſe we go further, that we ſearch and read the Scriptures, and by their help unravel this cloſe comprehenſive Article, and believe explicitly all the glorious truths, concerning *Jeſus*, the Author of our Faith and Religion, which are involv'd in it: Such as are, That his Generation is Eternal, his Subſtance the ſame with that of the *Father*, that he came into the World the true *Meſſiah*, the very *Chriſt*, our Anointed *King*, *Prophet*, and *Prieſt*, to rule us, to teach us, and to offer himſelf a Sacrifice for us. Suppoſe we be full and orthodox in our Creeds and Confeſſions of Faith, able to confute all ſorts of Hereticks out of Scripture and Tradition, Fathers and Councels, and to talk learnedly of all the Errors and Controverſies, which from Age to Age have ſprung up in the Church of God: This ſurely muſt do much; and he that is thus qualifyed may well paſs for a true Believer: but even this Faith wants ſomewhat: it may denominate a Man ſound and orthodox, it may help him

to

to run down a Gainſayer, or baffle a Diſputer of this World, but it cannot overcome the World it ſelf, and is not therefore that which my Text means.

But what if beſides all this with a lively apprehenſion I can lay hold on Chriſt, or make him mine? What if with an undaunted Confidence, without any care or conſideration of my own Obedience, I can rely wholly upon his for my Juſtification? What if without any regard to my actions, let me live how I pleaſe, I can apply all thoſe gracious and glorious Promiſes to my ſelf which are made only to the good and holy? in a word, what if I can account my ſelf juſtifyed, and in favour with God, only becauſe I ſtrongly imagine that I am ſo? Somewhat indeed very like this hath been taught for juſtifying Faith. But can a Man's believing that he is juſtified, be the cauſe of his juſtification? A Propoſition is believed, becauſe it is, we think, true; but does not therefore preſently become true, becauſe we believe it. In a word, let us not flatter our ſelves, that God ever made natural aſſurance, confidence, or preſumption, the Conditions of our Salvation. No, if ever ſuch a

Faith as this renders us Conquerors, 'tis but juſt as a pleaſing Dream makes us happy, or as a ſtrong but wild fancy may make Madmen think themſelves Princes.

That therefore by which we muſt conquer the World is none of theſe ſpeculative, aiery, fanciful things, but ſomewhat more real and ſubſtantial, more ſtrong and active. Not a barren Aſſent, like that which we give to Mathematical Demonſtration, whoſe influence reaches no further than the Judgment, and renders not our Life more fruitful at all in good actions; nor like the Hiſtorical Faith which the Devils have and yet continue Devils ſtill. No, 'tis the belief of all the wholſome Doctrines of our Chriſtian Religion, not lightly ſwimming and floating about in our heads, but by the Grace of God, and the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit, ſo inwardly grafted in our hearts, that it becomes a ſtrong Principle of Action in us, powerfully ſwaying us againſt the inclinations of our corrupt Nature, and making us live at a quite different rate, as if we were not the ſame Men that we were before we believed. When we believe that *Jeſus* is the Son of God, that is, when we ſo believe it that all the World

may

may ſee a difference between us and thoſe who do not: When we walk faſter and with more concern towards Heaven in the ways of God's Commandments, than a little faint decay'd Morality would carry us; and by that ſhew that a good Chriſtian has ſomewhat more in him than an honeſt Heathen: When we live in humble Obedience, like Men who believe their Lawgiver to be the Son of God; whoſe main buſineſs is Holineſs and Devotion, who adore his Divine Perſon, reverence his high Authority, obey his juſt and wiſe Commands, and imitate his good and great Example: When we heartily eſpouſe his Intereſt, and fight againſt the Luſts of the Fleſh, his declar'd Enemies; reſiſt the Devil, whoſe works he came to deſtroy; and trample upon the World, which he in our nature, and to encourage us by his Example, overcame before us.

This is the Faith that muſt overcome the World, even an active one; for Heaven, the reward of this Victory, was never promis'd to them that did nothing. What a vain thing therefore were it, to think that bare believing will put us in poſſeſſion of it? that the Crown of Glory is expos'd as the prize, not

not of thoſe who run and fight, but of ſuch as idlely ſit ſtill, and expect confidently, that without any more ado it ſhould at laſt drop upon their heads, and that only becauſe they fanſie it will?

II. 26. St. *James* tells us, *That Faith without Works is dead.* How then ſhall its feeble, lifeleſs hands weild all the mighty Weapons of our ſpiritual Warfare? How ſhall it demoliſh the ſtrong Holds of Satan, diſarm and bind that powerful one, bring away the Spoils, and ſet up the Trophies of its Conqueſts? If in ſuch a Faith only as this is we have hope, we are of all Men moſt deceiv'd, of all Men moſt miſerable: For this Victory will coſt us labour and toyl and ſweat, nay and perhaps blood too, as well as Worldly Conqueſts do, none of which can be expected from a mere dead Belief.

Some are ſo ſpiritual and refin'd in their Religion, that they are afraid that Works, let them be never ſo good, ſhould marr their Faith, and hinder its Efficacy: And ſo indeed they may, if we abuſe them: if we truſt in them for Salvation, and think to merit Heaven by them, and juſtify our ſelves by their Righteouſneſs. The abuſing them thus

thus may, but the doing them can never harm us. No, they give us good hopes and aſſurance, that our Faith is alive and vigorous in us, that it has or will at length, if we thus perſiſt, conquer for us. And this you may gather from the xi. Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, which is nothing elſe but a lofty rehearſal of theſe Triumphs of Faith: where the Apoſtle, when he hath told you of *Enoch*'s Faith, which tranſlated him an extraordinary way into the Regions of Life, without ſo much as ever touching upon the Confines of Death, ſubjoins, as the cauſe of it, his walking with God, and pleaſing him with his good Converſation: When he has told you of *Noah*'s Faith, he ſhews you immediately that it was ſuch a Faith, as ſet his hands on work about the Ark, and making proviſion for the ſaving himſelf and his Family in the Deluge: when he has mentioned *Abraham*'s Faith, the next things you hear of, are its noble and wonderful Effects, his leaving his native Country at God's Command, going he knew not whither, and making a foreign and ſtrange Land his home; how it enabled him, in Obedience to God's Command, to conquer the ſtrong affection

of

of a Father to an only Son, and to lift up the Sacrificing Knife againſt the Fruit of his own Body, the Object of his moſt paſſionate love. Such a Faith therefore as will ſtrengthen Men in doing what God would have them, even when he commands the hardeſt things, is the Faith here meant.

II. I proceed now in the ſecond place to ſpeak of the World, which 'tis here ſaid to conquer: And this, like the viſible World, is of ſo large an extent, that we cannot poſſibly view it all at one proſpect: it hath ſuch a variety of dark and horrid Regions, full of Labyrinths and Monſters, that it is ſcarce poſſible to deſcribe them, and therefore it muſt be very hard to overcome them: It hath its Depths and Abyſſes not to be fathom'd, Rocks and Sands hardly to be avoided, Storms and Tempeſts every where threatning us. There is nothing in the Elementary World ſo full of difficulty, danger, and terrour, but that this World of iniquity can ſhew ſomewhat far more dangerous and terrible.

If we will deſcribe it plainly in its proper Colours, which are black enough, it includes

cludes all the evils and miſchiefs that a Man who hath a mind to be good, can reaſonably be afraid of; all allurements to what is bad, and all diſcouragements from what is good; all thoſe innumerable temptations to Sin and Folly, which on every ſide encompaſs us, which meet us wherever we go, like the air we breath in, and as if they would ſeem like the Providence and Majeſty of God, to be every where, are about our Beds, and about our Paths, and beſet us in all our ways.

For inſtance, on our right hands we have Pleaſures bewitching us into their impure Embraces, Profit caſting out its golden Baits to entice us, Applauſe and Honour diſplaying their Pomps and Vanities to draw us after them, through all the unlawful ways they would lead us. We have Sloth, and Eaſe, and Security, like heavy dead weights hanging upon and hindring us from running the Race that is ſet before us; Plenty and Proſperity tempting us to forget God who gave us them, or to miſemploy them to his diſſervice.

On the left hand the World preſents us with a quite different unpleaſant proſpect of

Oppoſitions and Hardſhips, of Scorn and Shame, of Poverty and Want, nay ſometimes (and may that Scene never open in our days, as it once threatned to do) with Bonds and Impriſonments, with Torments and Death to be undergone by thoſe who would live godly in the true profeſſion of the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt.

It has indeed pleas'd God in mercy to remove theſe extraordinary diſcouragements in our duty; but ſtill we have ordinary and common ones enough to encounter with, ſuch as are the general neglect of real true Religion, which makes it diſregarded as a thing out of faſhion: The diſputes about it among the ſeemingly Learned and Wiſe, but really contentious, which ſhake and unſettle it: It's being derided by the pretended Wits, and conſequently decried by their Admirers the Atheiſtical Fools of this Age, which makes it every where a ſport and a by-word, and a ſubject for thoſe ill-furniſht heads and ill-diſpoſed minds, who cannot be witty without being prophane, to trifle with: all which determents from the paths of true Wiſdom, our Faith alone, and that a lively active one, muſt and can overcome for us.

But

But this is not all, The World (I mean, what is bad in it) ſtops not here, but malitiouſly purſues us in all the circumſtances of our lives; ſo that nothing either good or bad can happen to us, but that the World mixes ſome of its Poyſon with it, and turns it to a Temptation: Thus how apt are Strength and Power to tempt us to Violence and Oppreſſion; Beauty to Pride and Unchaſtity, Sickneſs to Impatience, Health to Security and not conſidering our latter end? Our Table frequently becomes a Snare to us, and thoſe things which ſhould have been for our health, prove the occaſion of our falling: The Pleaſure and Refreſhment we find in our lawful Recreations, tempt us to a more large and greedy enjoyment of them than is fit: Our Civility and good Manners put us upon compliances in Exceſs; and the torrent of Mirth and Company too often carries us beyond our due bounds.

But beſides this World without us, we have one within us. That without this would do us little harm. Thoſe Enemies abroad hold a treacherous Correſpondence with falſe Friends at home: The Fleſh is willing to comply with all that the World ſhall propoſe,

poſe, and is as induſtrious to betray, as that is to deſtroy us. That under this expreſſion *The World* our carnal Luſts are comprehended, this ſame Apoſtle tells us: For all that is in the World, *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the Eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the World.* This is a World not of God's but of our own Creating. The Foundation of it was laid in the ruins of our Original Righteouſneſs, it began the ſame moment with Sin, and hence are thoſe Temptations that ſit ſo cloſe to us, or rather live in us, wearying us with their conſtant Sollicitations, and melting us with their warm Entreaties, warring againſt our Souls with the gentle but dangerous Weapons of pretended Kindneſs. When they diſpute, no Arguments are ſo hardly anſwered as theirs, which carry the convictions of Intereſt, and Pleaſure, and Self-love along with them: When they ſtand up to plead their own Cauſe, they muſt almoſt neceſſarily prevail, their Oratory has Charms, and Violence hard to be reſiſted. They ſeem all the while to talk on our ſide, and therefore to deny them what they would have, is called in Scripture Language, denying our ſelves, which

C. 11. v. 16.

few

few have the heart and reſolution to do.

The Devil alſo, the Prince of this World, may here be underſtood, who by inſinuating himſelf into us, by learning and obſerving all our ſecret Inclinations, and then fitting his Temptations to our Luſts, knows how and where to wound us: as long therefore as he remains Unconquer'd, our Victory is imperfect: and from a conſideration of this dangerous Station in which we are ſet, and the many and powerful and ſubtle Enemies we have to deal with, we may conclude, that as by the mere ſtrength of nature we cannot be ſafe; ſo, that nothing leſs than ſo powerful an aſſiſtance as that of Faith can make us Conquerours.

III. I come now in the laſt place to ſhew how our Faith overcomes, and what kind of Victory it is, that it obtains for us.

And firſt, 'tis not from any ſtrength of ours that our Faith conquers; Had that Weapon no force but what it receiv'd from our weak Arms, it would do little Execution. No, 'tis the Lord of Hoſts, the Lord mighty in Battle, who even in this Spiritual Warfare

Warfare teaches our hands to War, and our Fingers to fight; to him therefore muſt our Succeſs be aſcribed, in his Temple muſt the ſpoils be hung up. It is he who works in us all the good we do, and if we can do all, nay any thing, 'tis through Chriſt who ſtrengthens us.

But ſecondly, though it be through the Grace of God, and by the powerful aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, that our Faith becomes Victorious; yet is the concurrence of a willing mind in us thereto requir'd. For whatever God by his Omnipotence may do, yet he does not ordinarily work this Work in us directly againſt our Wills, nor inſpire this Faith into our Hearts as irreſiſtibly as at firſt he did the breath of Life into our Noſtrils, making us as purely paſſive in our Spiritual, as we were in our natural Birth. He has enabled us to do ſomewhat our ſelves, elſe he would never be ſo hard, ſo auſtere a Maſter, as to require any thing of us.

Again our Faith doth not (as ſome vainly expect it ſhould) Conquer this World in a moment, or like a flaſh of Lightning from Heaven conſume all our Sins, and melt our Hearts, and change us into quite other Men

in

in an inſtant. No, it carries on its Victorious Arms a ſlow but ſure and ſteady pace; it gains ground Foot by Foot, and is forc'd to diſpute every ſtep that it moves. From ſmall beginnings it proceeds by degrees to greater ſtrength; and is therefore frequently in Scripture compared to ſuch things, whoſe Originals are weak and almoſt unperceivable, their increaſe ſlow and in a manner unſenſible, but their effects certain and powerful.

As for the manner of the Combat, a Man's Faith or Religion teaches him to ſet the Battle regularly in array, confronting every Vice which ſhall aſſault him with the exerciſe of ſome contrary Grace, or Chriſtian Virtue; and then it fares with theſe Combatants as it does with the contrary qualities in natural Bodies, as one grows intenſe, the other becomes remiſs, what one loſes, the other gains, and at length one of them will and muſt expel the other. Nor is it wanting (if I may without affectation purſue a Metaphor in which St. *Paul* ſeems to delight and uſe upon all occaſions) in all the other arts and advantages of War by which Worldly Victories are gain'd. For fear of ſurprizes, it ſets a diligent watch upon all the ways by

by which temptations can have acceſs to the Heart; to avoid diſorder, confuſion, mutiny in its own Camp, it wiſely holds the reins of our tumultuous Paſſions, checks the hoſt and violence of their Motions, guides their Strength, and directs their Force, and applies it aright and where it may be moſt effectual. By faſting and mortification it ſtarves our Luſts, and reduces thoſe ſtubborn Enemies by cutting off all Proviſion from them. It encourages us by the noble Example of thoſe that have been Conquerours in this War before us, eſpecially recounting to us the great Atchievements of *Chriſt Jeſus* the Captain of our Salvation, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith. It fixes our Eyes upon the ineſtimable rewards laid up for thoſe, who couragiouſly fight this fight, an Eternal weight of Glory, a thing which in this Life we can apprehend no more, than Infant-Princes can the greatneſs of the Empires they are born to.

Thus it is that Faith overcomes, and the Victory, which it obtains, conſiſts in this, that it at laſt ſets us above the World, above fearing its Frowns, or courting its Favours, fixing

fixing us upon the ſure Foundation of a good Conſcience, and a reſolution to keep it by doing our Duty, ſo that temptations of what ſort ſoever may preſs in upon us, but never move us from our Station. It inſpires us with Heavenly Wiſdom, Gratitude and Courage to anſwer all the ſollicitations to Sin, as once the virtuous *Joſeph* did, *How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* But by the way we muſt not flatter our ſelves, that our Victory can in this Life be perfect, ſo that no Sin ſhall be left undeſtroyed to make head againſt us. No, we muſt go down into our Graves fighting, and conquer dying, and at the Reſurrection our Victory ſhall be compleat, and our Eternal Triumphs begin, when Death, our laſt Enemy, ſhall be deſtroyed. Gen. xxxix. 9.

Thus have I endeavour'd briefly and plainly to ſhow you the true meaning of the Apoſtle in theſe words, namely, That the main work and buſineſs of Faith is to make us firſt good and holy, and then happy Men; that the only end Religion was intended for, is the ſaving of our Souls by ſubduing our Spiritual Enemies. They who contrary to this interpretation of the Text

make Faith to be nothing elſe but the perſwaſion of their own Party, and its Victory nothing elſe but the prevailing of that perſwaſion over all other Religions in the World, introduce a new Faith quite different from that which is truly Chriſtian; A reſtleſs troubleſome Faith, which will neither ſuffer the ſubject to live an honeſt and peaceable, nor the Prince, under whom it is profeſt, a quiet and an eaſy Life; A Faith apter to deſtroy Mens lives than to mend them; A Faith debaſed with an unnatural mixture of Paſſion, Prejudice, Intereſt, and I know not what other deſigns and practices, to which true Religion is utterly a Stranger, and has nothing to do with them.

Whereas the Faith in my Text is quite another thing; its Victories are gain'd without Noiſe or Tumult, without giving any the leaſt diſturbance to the State where 'tis profeſt. Its aim is to make men kind and good-natur'd, Juſt and Temperate, Meek and Humble, Religious and Devout, Loyal and Obedient; to ſuch a Faith Princes are beholden for its good Effects, as That is to Them for their kind and graciousProtection.

And

And if we practiſe according to this Holy Faith, beſides the ſpiritual advantages we gain by it, we ſhall moſt effectually ſecond the generous deſigns and endeavours of a Prince, who would make us Happy in this World. We ſhall engage God, the Almighty giver of Succeſs and Victory on his ſide, to preſerve his Perſon, to proſper his Arms, and to bleſs him in all his juſt and wiſe Undertakings. As we thus Profeſs and Believe, God grant we may Do accordingly, that our Church may never want this Faith, nor this Faith ſuch a King and Queen as it now enjoys, and may it long enjoy them to be the Defenders of it.

Now to the Bleſſed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no Man hath ſeen nor can ſee, Be honour and power Everlaſting, Amen. 1 Tim. VI. 15, 16.

FINIS.